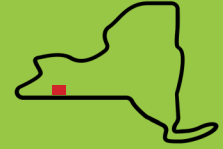




## PlanWorks Case Study

# Performance-Based Planning and Programming Genesee Transportation Council



*This case study is an excellent example of performance-based planning and programming within a collaborative process. Although GTC did not use PlanWorks, the Long Range Planning and Programming key decisions represented here will be very useful in helping other agencies with this interface.*

### Executive Summary

The Genesee Transportation Council (GTC) is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Rochester, New York metropolitan area. The MPO covers the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region, which spans 4,700 square miles across nine counties. In addition to Rochester (the third largest city in the State), the region includes smaller urban centers, mature and emerging suburbs, as well as rural towns and extensive agricultural lands. The MPO is also part of two locally-defined “mega-regions”, Tor-Buf-Chester and the Great Lakes: both of which are bi-national, spreading into parts of Canada.

The Long-Range Transportation Plan for the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region 2040 (LRTP 2040) was adopted June 9, 2016, and uses a performance-based framework. LRTP 2040 identifies regional goals, objectives, and performance measures that are outcome-based and clearly defined. GTC sought to ensure that the selected performance measures would be both meaningful and understandable to users and policymakers, providing a common basis to discuss changes in how the transportation system is meeting or not meeting regional needs.

LRTP 2040 represents a continued commitment to a performance-based planning process by including a subset of performance measures presented in the previous LRTP 2035 and introducing new measures. The performance-based framework in the long range plan is carried through the programming process. The region also uses a structured project prioritization process for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which ties individual projects to the regional goals and objectives. For LRTP 2040, GTC revamped its public involvement approach to include a range of engagement techniques including social media. The plan also discusses the role of the region within the larger mega-regions, and employed two scenarios for analysis.

### Project Snapshot

- LRTP 2040 continues the commitment to a performance-based planning process begun in the previous plan; including some past performance measures along with new measures.
- The performance-based framework in the long range plan is carried through programming, using a structured project prioritization process for the TIP.
- GTC’s long-range planning process considered operations as key to addressing transportation deficiencies. This is reflected in project funding outside of the TIP prioritization process.
- GTC worked closely with the Region 4 Office of the New York State Department of Transportation to develop the TIP; jointly issuing the call for project proposals.
- GTC has reframed its public involvement process as “Customer Engagement,” changing communication methods and materials to improve stakeholder interface.

## Agency's Challenge

The Genesee-Finger Lakes Region is part of two locally-defined “mega-regions”: Tor-Buf-Chester and the Great Lakes. A mega-region is comprised of multiple regions that are linked by interdependent economic, environmental, cultural and infrastructure relationships. Both locally-defined “mega-regions” that influence GTC planning are bi-national, spreading into parts of Canada. In developing plans and programs, GTC acknowledges that its transportation system plays a role in the movement of freight and people within these surrounding areas.

Despite this larger surrounding context, the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region itself has experienced only modest population growth since the 1970s. This trend is expected to continue, and is mirrored by slow employment growth projections. GTC understands the reality of limited population and employment growth, and has developed Guiding Principles to reshape its approach to transportation planning given the region's unique needs and characteristics. The four Guiding Principles that frame LRTP 2040<sup>1</sup> are:

- **Plan for People:** People are the customers, not transportation infrastructure (e.g., highways, bridges, buses, sidewalk, trails, etc.). Ensuring the safe, reliable, and efficient transportation for people and the products of their labor is the most important consideration. This first and primary guiding principle of LRTP 2040 and is consistent with and is key to advancing the mission of GTC.
- **Place Matters:** Where people live, work, and play will determine the appropriate solutions to their transportation needs. The Region's residents and its businesses live and operate in diverse settings. While transportation needs are similar across the Region (everyone needs both mobility and access to their home, jobs, services, etc.), how these needs can and should be met will differ.
- **Transition to Tomorrow:** Adequate transportation funding for the foreseeable future is significantly less than the amount required to maintain a state of good repair. Emphasis on a balanced investment approach between management and operations, preservation, and rehabilitation and reconstruction needs to take precedent.

## Decision Guide Connections

The development of LRTP 2040 generally follows the Decision Guide key decisions. Noteworthy activities are indicated below.

- **LRP-2.** The LRTP 2040 vision and goals also consider the surrounding mega-regions.
- **LRP-3.** 15 outcome-based performance measures were designed to be easily understood by decision makers, policy makers, and the public.
- **LRP-6.** GTC used scenario analysis representing land use patterns in both the 2035 and 2040 LRTP, reflecting unchanged socioeconomic forecasts.
- **PRO-1.** Specific projects such as incident management and the traffic operations center use set-aside revenue and do not compete for funding with other initiatives.
- **PRO-2.** GTC and NYSDOT Region 4 jointly issue the call for projects from counties, municipalities and other eligible entities
- **PRO-4.** GTC and NYSDOT Region 4 staff evaluate the proposed projects to ensure consistency with performance measures for preliminary ranking of the projects.
- **PRO-5.** To develop the draft TIP, funding sources are matched to the TDC prioritized projects, funding those most valuable to the region.

- **Accept Uncertainty:** Even though the FAST Act provides funding certainty over five years, how transportation investments will be funded over the long-term remains uncertain. Transportation funding at the federal, state, and local levels continues to remain extremely limited and is not keeping pace with the levels needed to maintain the system.

These principles represent a shift away from a capacity-expansion focus that is common in high-growth regions towards a more balanced approach to planning that maximizes limited resources by employing more cost-effective solutions.

<sup>1</sup> LRTP 2040, Chapter 2, page 13

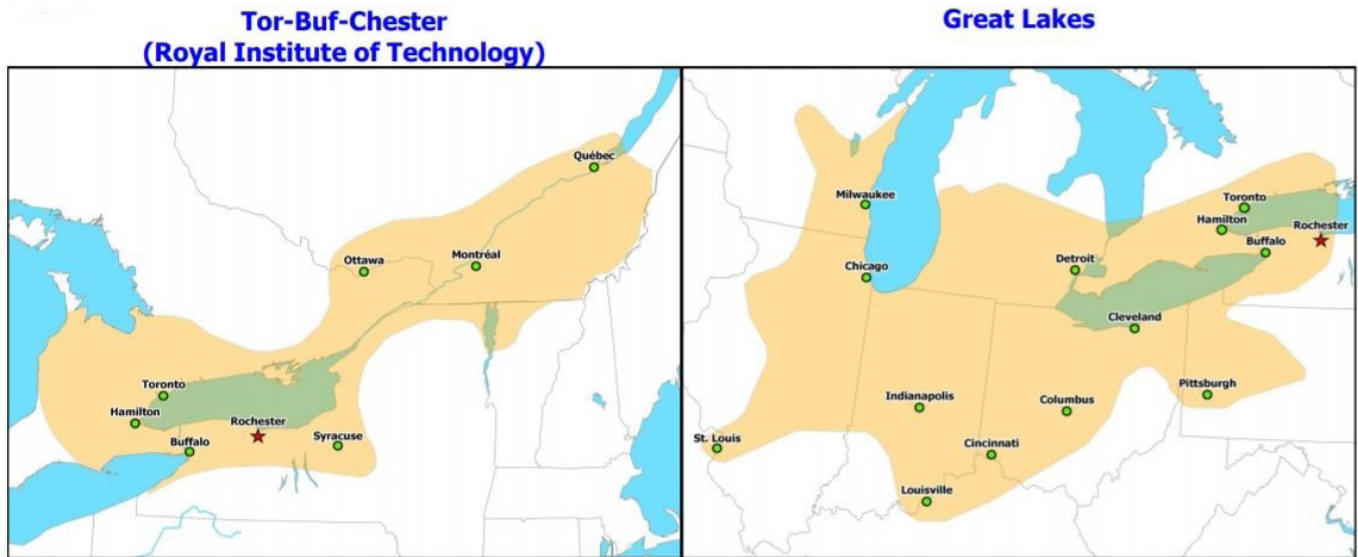


Figure 1: Megaregions surrounding the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region  
(Source: Long Range Transportation Plan for the Genesee Finger-Lakes Region 2040)

## Long-Range Transportation Planning

The vision and goals articulated in LRTP 2040 are not confined to regional perspectives, but also consider the influences of being part of two mega-regions. Although growth is limited within the MPO planning region, the economy is tied to the needs and resources of the mega-regions as well. Performance measures identified in LRTP 2040 continue GTC's performance-based planning approach that began with LRTP 2035. The current plan includes a subset of performance measures included in the previous plan, in addition to new measures. There are a total of 15 performance measures related to Safety, System Preservation, Mobility, Accessibility, and Environment.

GTC focused on using performance measures that were clear and concise; such as Average Age of Transit Buses; Median Incident Clearance Time on Major Roadways; and Gaps in Multi-Use Trails Network. The long-range plan also included a benchmark for each measure and the desired direction of change over time (e.g. decrease in incident clearance time). The clarity of the performance measures helped facilitate discussions about how well the transportation system is supporting the long range vision and goals.

GTC started using scenario analysis with the development of LRTP 2035 to consider how any anticipated growth might be distributed geographically. The two scenarios from LRTP 2035, which represent very different land use trends, were

used again in the current plan, as the projections remained unchanged:

- “Familiar Tomorrow” – Assumes that historical development trends (i.e., growth radiating from urban center) will continue.
- “Changing Landscape” – Focuses on more compact development, spurred by re-densification around Rochester.

GTC solicited feedback on the alternative scenarios, and found that the “Changing Landscape” pattern was favored by stakeholders and the public.

## Programming

At the beginning of the programming process, GTC identified “reasonably expected” revenues available from federal funding sources. In the 2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), funding sources totaled approximately \$310 million in Federal-aid from several sources. These Federal funds were supplemented by State and local sources.

The performance-based goals and objectives from the long range plan were integrated into the TIP project selection criteria. Of the 130 maximum points, 100 were tied directly to the goals and performance measures in the LRTP. The remaining 30 points were mode/asset-specific for highway and bridge, public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian, intelligent transportation systems (ITS), goods movement, and other projects.

GTC worked closely with the Region 4 Office of the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to develop the TIP. The agencies jointly issued the call for projects from counties, municipalities and other eligible entities, including NYSDOT and the Rochester Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (RGRTA). A team of GTC and NYSDOT Region 4 staff conducted an evaluation of the proposed projects, using the selection criteria to ensure that the prioritization was based on responsiveness of proposals to the performance measures. GTC programmed projects in the Rochester Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA), and projects outside of this area were programmed by NSYDOT Region 4 in coordination with GTC. All projects were initially ranked by GTC and Region 4 using the established criteria in order to select the most beneficial projects for funding. The outcome was a preliminary project ranking.

The preliminary ranking was reviewed by the TIP Development Committee (TDC), comprised of representatives from the four counties within the MPA, the City of Rochester, RGRTA, and NYSDOT. The TDC had the ability to adjust the rankings to address geographic balance around the region, the capacity of sponsors to deliver their projects in a timely and cost-effective manner, or other considerations not factored into the evaluation criteria.

To develop the draft TIP, funding sources were matched to projects. When the draft TIP was released for the 30-day public comment period, it contained two lists: projects recommended for funding and proposed projects for which funding was not anticipated in the four-year period. Public comments were considered by the TDC and the GTC Planning Committee prior to revising the draft TIP for final review and recommendation to the MPO Board.

### Linking Planning and Operations

In LRTP 2040, GTC committed to “maintain the existing condition and performance of our most crucial assets as best we can, manage the decline of lesser facilities and structures without compromising safety, and implement limited expansions whenever feasible.”<sup>2</sup> This approach has resulted in an increased emphasis on system preservation and maintenance as well as system management and operations as represented by the

Transition Toward Tomorrow Guiding Principle.

One of the seven goals in LRTP 2040 is to “Promote efficient system management and operations.” This goal asserts that transportation investments should “maximize benefits relative to costs” and recognizes the cost-effectiveness of ITS strategies that focus on systems operations. GTC’s long range planning process considers operations as a key component of addressing transportation deficiencies. These strategies support several performance objectives: Reduce travel times on major roadways; Reduce incident clearance time; Increase productivity of regional transportation agencies/providers (e.g., cost savings, time savings, etc.); and Support or advance existing and/or proposed ITS elements.

GTC dedicates set aside funding for two priority ITS projects which do not compete within the prioritization process:

- Implementing the Highway Emergency Local Patrol (HELP) Program, which provides emergency roadside service to disabled vehicles. This is an important initiative in minimizing non-recurring incident-based delay and in increasing safety on major highways by reducing the potential for secondary incidents. NYSDOT Region 4 found that the HELP Program had one of the highest benefit/cost ratios of any initiative assessed.
- Funding for on-going staffing of the Regional Traffic Operations Center (RTOC), including continued 24-hour operations and training of NYSDOT and Monroe County personnel at this facility.

<i>System Management and Operations</i>					
1. Reduce travel times on major roadways	0	2	4	6	8 10
2. Reduce incident clearance times	0	2	4	6	8 10
3. Increase the productivity of regional transportation agencies/providers (e.g., cost savings, time savings, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4 5
4. Support or advance existing and/or proposed ITS elements	0	1	2	3	4 5

Figure 2: Mode-specific project evaluation criteria for systems management and operation. (Source: 2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program)

Additionally, there is a mode-specific category for ITS (up 30 points) in the scoring criteria. This dedicated



mode-specific category allows operations projects to be competitive with capacity projects.

### Stakeholder Collaboration

GTC's efforts to develop LRTP 2040 included the "most extensive public participation" for long-range transportation planning, to date. For previous plans, public involvement consisted of traditional town hall meetings, with a presentation followed by a question and answer session. GTC overhauled its public involvement approach for the current plan, committing to the meaningful involvement of stakeholders and the general public – even reframing it as "Customer Engagement." The MPO employed a broad range of engagement activities to capture feedback from residents, stakeholders and businesses in the community throughout the planning process, including:

- Leveraging Community Events – GTC engaged with customers at 13 venues across the region, including farmers markets and shopping malls to get input for the long range plan.
- Using Online Tools and Social Media – GTC developed multiple online surveys and a WikiMap to gather input from resident and businesses in the region. The WikiMap allowed customers to identify specific transportation issues and opportunities, or provide general input. Comment categories included were categorized as Pedestrian, Accessibility, Bicycle, Bus/Transit, Vehicle and Freight. GTC also sought feedback through its Twitter account (@GTCMPO).

- Reaching Stakeholders with Direct Mailings – GTC sent direct mailings to more than 250 contacts, primarily stakeholders from its environmental justice database. The mailers offered to meet directly with interested groups at their convenience.

- Revamping Public Meeting Format – GTC switched its public meeting format from town hall to open house. The open house meetings featured multiple stations where attendees could engage with planners face-to-face instead of in front of a large group.

- Producing Customer-Friendly Documents – GTC developed attractive layouts for the draft plan released for public review, ensuring a format that was easily read and understand.

### Key Outcomes

GTC's transportation planning and programming processes have evolved into a more collaborative approach, while remaining performance-based. The MPO has an established partnership with the NYSDOT Region 4 Office and proactively engages with stakeholders and the public. GTC considers the role of its transportation system in the broader mega-regions as well as the experience of the system customers. This comprehensive perspective has resulted in a vision and goals that balance mega-regional and local priorities. Individual project selection criteria directly tied to performance goals ensures that the planning and programming processes are integrated.

## For more information

### Contact

#### Jody Binnix, GTC

Program Manager - Long Range Planning & Performance Measurement  
jbinnix@gtcmpo.org

### Resources

- Long Range Transportation Plan for the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region 2040

<http://www.gtcmpo.org/lrtp>

- Transportation Improvement Program: Fiscal Years 2017 – 2020 <http://www.gtcmpo.org/tip>